

NOTES ON *CONOPHYTUM FICIFORME*
(HAW.) N.E.BR. AND *CONOPHYTUM*
PLACITUM (N.E.BR.) N.E.BR.

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Report of field-observations made by F. J. Stayner and R. C. Littlewood during the month of June from 1960—1964

Area Surveyed. DIVISIONS OF WORCESTER, ROBERTSON AND MONTAGU. From 3 miles north to 5 miles north-west of Worcester, thence 7 miles north-east of Worcester (De Wet) and the southern foothills of the Hex River Mountains—K.G.418, 418A, 419, and 420/60.

The south-western foothills of the Rabiesberg and the Kwadouwberg—K.G.431, 432, 436, and 437/60.

Hills south of the road from Nuy to Robertson, including the farm 'Eilandia'—K.G.202/63.

The farm 'Dublin', south of the Breede River—K.G.382/61.

South of Robertson—K.G.433/60 and crossing the Breede River at this point—K.G. 434/60.

The foothills of Cogman's Kloof.

Habitat. Mainly in shale on karoid hills, except K.G. 433/60 and 382/61 which grew in Table Mountain Sandstone, although the soil was shale-like in appearance. Growing in crevices of rock out-crops at moderate heights, or flat ground covered with stones coated with lichens. Isolated colonies often found on the same hill, each assuming its own predominant variation, as in K.G. 418, 418A, (De Wet). Found at all points of the compass, in full sun or protected from the afternoon sun.

Growth. *Plants* glabrous, forming compact clumps, those growing on flat ground forming domes, those on shale out-crops forming more or less flat mats. Plants with red or green bodies growing together, either in shade or exposed positions—K.G. 433, 434/60 (Robertson).

Shape of the bodies variable—cordate, obconical, fig-shaped, sometimes truncate, as in K.G. 418A. (De Wet). Top of the body usually with a faint to

strong ridge at right angles to the orifice, often forming a keel. The persistent sheaths of previous years crowded and papery.

Colouring variable—red, reddish-green, bright green, or yellowish to brownish green, and on the sides of the body reddish to green, sometimes with green translucent dots.

Markings variable—single scattered translucent green dots, or dots confluent into lines on the ridge and around the margin of the lobes, occasionally the green dots being superimposed by red raised dots. Markings often vary on the bodies of one plant.

The only stable characteristic is a line of translucent dots on the margin of the orifice, with a confused translucent area comprised of dots at each end of the orifice.

Flowers. *Calyx* herbaceous, segments 4.

Corolla variable in colour—white, white with pale pink tips, pale to dark pink, often having a white 'eye', the segments variable in length and width.

Stamens in several series.

Style short, red in dark pink corollas, yellowish green in paler corollas.

Colonies of pink-flowered plants occur north of Worcester and south of Robertson—K.G. 419, 420, 402, 434, 435, and 437/60.

Mixed colonies of specimens with white and pink flowers occur at the Karoo Garden—K.G. 331/60 and De Wet—K.G. 418/60.

White and pink flowers occur on the same plant on 6 specimens observed.

Flowering in June, opening in late afternoon, and very strongly scented, probably one of the strongest in the genus.

Conclusion. The numerous collections made and the extensive field-observations recorded have enabled us to state with confidence that *C. odoratum* (N.E.Br.) N.E.Br. *M. jugiferum* N.E.Br., *C. altile* N.E.Br. and *C. pallidum* N.E.Br. are forms of *C. ficiforme* (Haw.) N.E.Br. and should therefore, be included in that species (published in 1821).

Conophytum ficiforme (Haw.) N.E.Br. *C. odoratum* (N.E.Br.) N.E.Br.; *M. jugiferum* N.E.Br.; *C. altile* N.E.Br.; *C. pallidum* N.E.Br.

The collection, K.G. 418/60 (De Wet), agrees with the description of the typical form of *C. ficiforme*, whilst less than two feet away were plants of K.G. 418A/60 answering to the description of *C. odoratum* with pear-shaped bodies. *C. pallidum* is a pale-flowered form with a white centre, which was found in most collections.

In all the published descriptions the only characteristic found to be stable is not mentioned.

If Dr. N. E. Brown had only received one specimen of the extreme forms,

he might in good faith have believed that each form grew on a hill of its own separated by a great distance, and not, as our recent field-survey has proved, that nearly every plant differs in the shape, size, colour and markings of the bodies, as well as in the shades of colour of the corolla, thus producing an infinite number of forms.

Conophytum placitum (N.E.Br.) N.E.Br. differs from **C. ficiforme** by its smaller growths, the corolla being much smaller and brush-like, with very narrow segments, and the expansion in the late evening.

It was collected on the farm 'Eilandia'—K.G. 202/63 and on the farm 'Dublin'—K.G. 382/61, both collections having yellowish flowers.

Conophytum placitum (N.E.Br.) N.E.Br. var. **pubescens** Littlew. var. nov.—*Corpuscula omnino minute pubescentia vel inferne glabra*.

Cape Province: in dit. Worcester; "growing freely on a koppie," June, 1961, *F. J. Stayner*. K.G. 382/61.

All plants examined have bodies completely and minutely pubescent at least on the apex, and in this respect differ from those of the typical form which were described as 'glabra'.

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